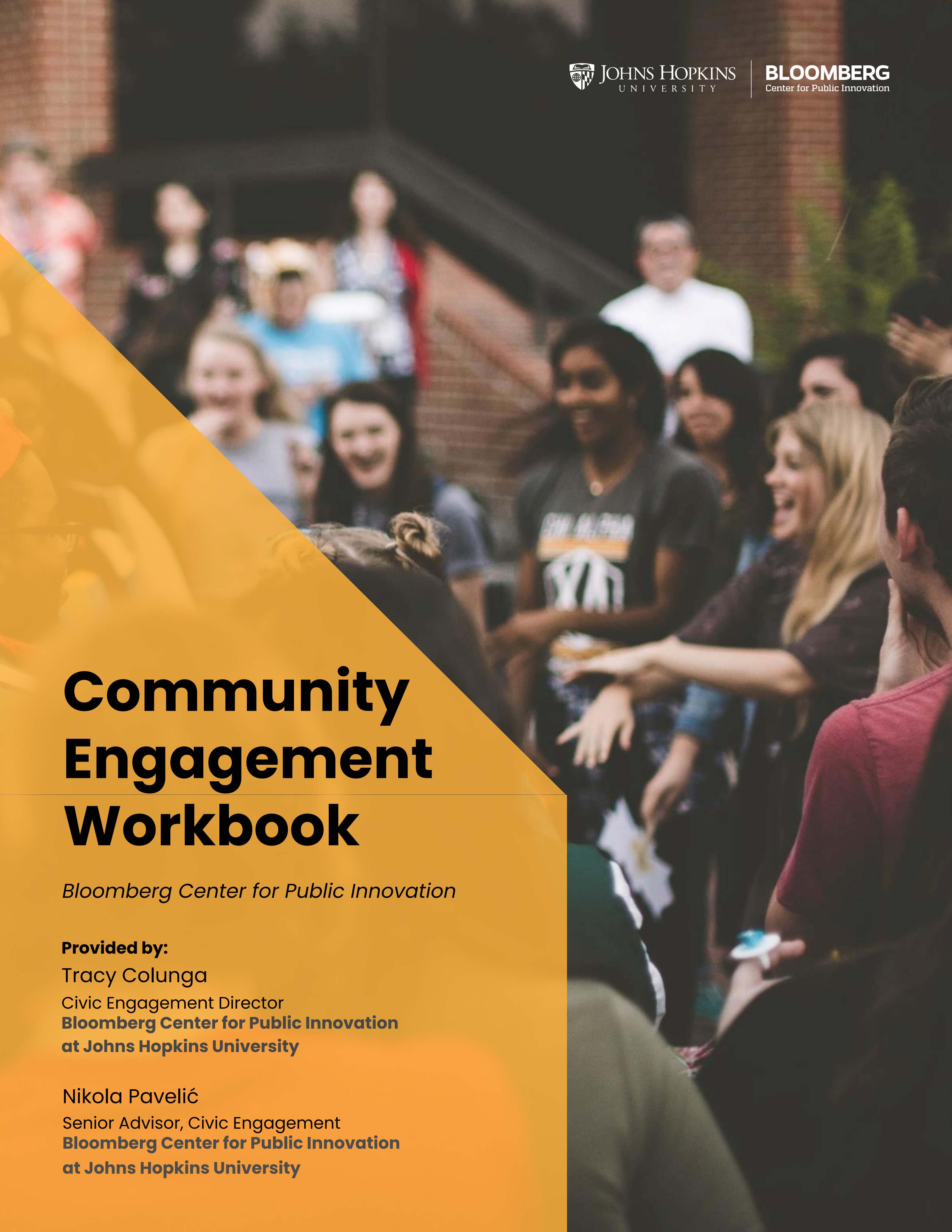

JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY | BLOOMBERG Center for Public Innovation

# Community Engagement Workbook

*Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation*


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# Introduction

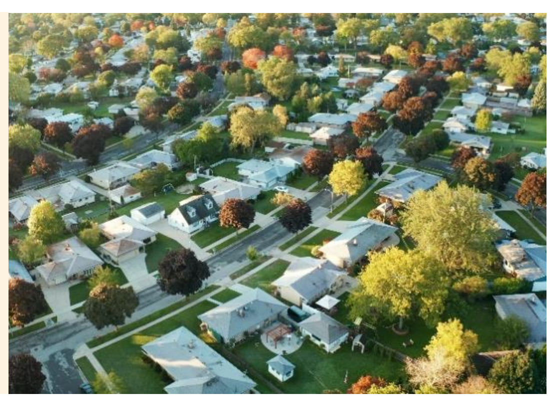
*"This Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will rebuild America's roads, bridges and rails, expand access to clean drinking water, ensure every American has access to high-speed internet, tackle the climate crisis, advance environmental justice, and invest in communities that have too often been left behind. The legislation will help ease inflationary pressures and strengthen supply chains by making long overdue improvements for our nation's ports, airports, rail, and roads. It will drive the creation of good-paying union jobs and grow the economy sustainably and equitably so that everyone gets ahead for decades to come."*

**- The White House** (https://www.whitehouse.gov/bipartisan-infrastructure-law/)

To fully deliver the benefits of these historic investments to communities, grant applications for funding supported by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law submitted by local governments must engage communities in the process. Comprehensive community engagement plans must achieve the following objectives:

- Capture community's values and priorities for proposed projects;
- Demonstrate deep outreach to and engagement of disadvantaged communities;
- Showcase the different engagement techniques used to drive community planning processes;
- Highlight how input from a diverse range of stakeholders, including people from disadvantaged communities, was gathered and incorporated into project conception and design;
- Highlight how community planning and stakeholder input will continue to be used to help direct project execution;
- Highlight practices put into place to manage conflict, sustain ongoing communication with stakeholders (especially disadvantaged communities), and continuously assess the engagement activities for diversity, inclusion, and equity;
- Demonstrate community-wide benefits and identify the proportion of the population that will be impacted, including a description of the disadvantaged communities;
- Describe how the project was selected and designed to maximize positive impacts and minimize negative impacts to any disadvantaged populations; demonstrate how disadvantaged communities are benefited; and
- Name partnerships that will ensure the project meets community needs, including those of overburdened and underserved populations, and show the outcome of those partnerships.

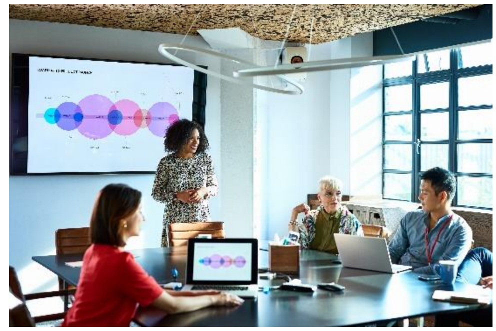
We at the *National League of Cities* along with our partners at *Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation* and *Delivery Associates* are proud to offer this community engagement workbook to help each grant applicant strive for the highest scores possible within the community engagement section of the grant application.



## Before You Begin

We know that local governments across the country have various community engagement practices in place already. Before you continue with the rest of the workbook, please take 10 minutes to fill out this survey. We will use this information to assess the usefulness of this workbook.

## Instructions



Engaging community members around project planning and implementation can be an exciting experience. Many city officials want to jump right in and start connecting with community members especially when timelines are tight. While that enthusiasm is necessary for effective community engagement, taking time to plan before engaging community members will produce better, longer-lasting results.

Below are steps city staff should work through in order to create a community engagement plan that will meet the objectives of the grant application. In addition, these steps will help city staff manage expectations, choose the most applicable community engagement techniques to implement, grow an informed community, build strategic partnerships, and make it easier for community members to take action.

Complete each step in the workbook to the best of your ability. While the sections of the workbook are meant to build on one another in a sequential manner, feel free to use the workbook in the order that makes the most sense for your work.

As you move through the workbook, you may realize that you need input from someone who is not with you at the time. This is okay and even to be expected. Take the time to get the input you need if you can. Remember, this is a discovery-based workbook which means that you will be learning what you need as you go along.

This workbook should be completed by city staff responsible for the grant application, the proposed project(s) in the grant application, and the community engagement work within the identified project(s).

## Definitions

| | |
|---|---|
| **Disadvantaged Community** | May be characterized by variables including, but not limited to, the following: low income; high and/or persistent poverty; high unemployment and underemployment; racial and ethnic segregation, particularly where the segregation stems from discrimination by government entities; linguistic isolation; high housing cost burden and substandard housing; distressed neighborhoods; high transportation cost burden and/or low transportation access; disproportionate environmental stressor burden and high cumulative impacts; limited water and sanitation access and affordability; disproportionate impacts from climate; high energy cost burden and low energy access; jobs lost through the energy transition; limited access to health care; and all geographic areas within Tribal jurisdictions. |
| **Stakeholders** | The community at large which includes funders, community members, and public and private partners. |
| **Community Members** | The public (individuals or groups). |
| **Funders** | Current or potential sources of capital for your project. |
| **Partners** | Those who will be included in the planning and implementation of the project regardless if there is a Community Engagement plan or not. |
| **Community Engagement Techniques** | The ways you are gathering public input and inviting action. |
| **Communication Channel or Channels** | The ways in which you are informing the public of critical information regarding the engagement. |
| **Project Manager** | Person responsible for the overall project success. |
| **Community Engagement Lead** | Person responsible for the development, management, and evaluation of the community engagement plan. |

**Additional roles for your project**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Facilitator** | A person who is acceptable to all group members, neutral on the matter, without decision-making power; this person pays attention to and guides the content, processes, and human needs of the participants. |
| **Convener** | Host who makes sure that all the logistical details for the experience are accounted for and that facilitators and scribes have everything they need; this person(s) ensures that every participant is greeted and followed up with if specific requests are made. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Scribe** | A person who documents what the participants are saying and makes this information available to staff and participants after the meeting. |
| **Data Coordinator** | A person who ensures evaluations and demographic data are collected, processed, and provided in understandable and simple reports to staff and participants. |
| **Marketing & Communications Coordinator** | In projects where there are multiple long-term engagement experiences, this person may coordinate social media accounts and additional logistics that are related to marketing and communications. |

## Section I: Identifying a project lead and the community engagement core team

Before any community engagement begins, it is important to identify a project lead who will manage the process and the community engagement core team that will lead work to establish a timely, relevant, equitable, and inclusive community engagement plan. Lastly, it is critical to pull together existing information and set clear parameters for the community engagement. There are *four* steps in this process:

**Step 1:** Selecting a project lead and the community engagement lead

**Step 2:** Establishing a core team

**Step 3:** Naming entry points for community engagement for the project

**Step 4:** Developing a project brief

### Step 1: Selecting project and community engagement lead(s)

**Who is/are the project lead(s)?**

______________________________________________________________________

*Note: This person(s) is responsible for the proposed project(s) in the grant application.*

**Who is/are the community engagement lead(s)?**

______________________________________________________________________

*Note: This person(s) is responsible for developing, managing, and evaluating the community engagement plan of the project(s).*

**Tip:** It is important for the community engagement lead and the project lead to meet weekly or bi-weekly during the community engagement plan development. This regular meeting will ensure that critical parameters about the project and any timeline changes are communicated on an ongoing basis to ensure minimal disruption to the engaged stakeholders.

## Step 2: Establishing a core team

Review the asset map you created and select the individuals you would want on your community engagement core team. The purpose of this core team will be to help the community engagement lead develop, manage, and evaluate the community engagement plan. Typically, the core team would meet at first weekly or bi-weekly to create the community engagement plan and then meet as needed during the management and evaluation phases. Meetings generally last two hours and have clear agendas which are emailed to all members prior to the meeting.

### Tips for selecting community engagement core team members

| | |
|---|---|
| They need to have expertise/familiarity with one or more of these areas:<br>▪ Trusting relationships with impacted community members<br>▪ Relationships with key stakeholders that may influence the community engagement plan<br>▪ Past community engagement efforts with the impacted community members and/or the problem being addressed or solution being proposed in the grant application<br>▪ Familiarity with the public problem and/or solution being proposed in the grant application<br>▪ Outreach experience<br>▪ Facilitation experience<br>▪ Data collection experience<br>▪ Communications background | Consider allocating stipends for core members not funded by the city.<br><br>Consider hosting the core team meetings in a location and during days and times that will ensure full participation of all the selected core team members.<br><br>Consider securing any additional accommodations such as food, transportation, childcare, and/or live interpretation. |

Once you've picked the individuals you'd like to invite to the core team, fill out the table below for each individual:

| Potential Core Team | Full name | Value add to the community engagement plan | Our ask of them | Do you know if they are a member of a disadvantaged group or if they serve community members who might be? If yes, indicate. If not, find out. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| | | 1 | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

After you've filled out the table above, take time to indicate how representative the core team is of members within the disadvantaged groups:

1 # low income

1 # high unemployment and underemployment

___# racial and ethnic representation

1 # people with disabilities

1 # linguistic representation

1 # live in census tracts or neighborhoods of focus

1 # Your choice: 1

## Step 3: Naming entry points for community engagement for the project

Before you bring the community engagement core group together, it is important to identify where all community engagement will take place during the lifespan of the proposed project. Before getting started, take time to review your community asset map (click here to view the community asset map handout).

The table below is a high-level overview of a typical project lifespan:

| Project Lifespan Table | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Criteria** | **Questions** | **Status** |
| **A. Identifying and scoping the problem(s)** | Have you already identified and scoped the problem the grant will address?<br>o If not, click the checkbox in the next column (Status).<br>o If yes, is there opportunity for any input gathering from impacted and interested community members and other critical stakeholders? If yes, click the checkbox in the next column. | ☐ |
| **B. Identifying, selecting, and scoping solution(s)** | Have you already picked a solution(s) for addressing the scoped problem?<br>o If not, click the checkbox in the next column.<br>o If yes, is there opportunity for any input gathering from impacted and interested community members and other critical stakeholders? If yes, click the checkbox in the next column. | ☐ |
| **C. Designing the chosen solution(s)** | If you have selected a solution(s), can you envision how community engagement could enhance and strengthen the design and implementation plans of the solution?<br>o If yes, click the checkboxes in the next column.<br>o If not, talk to some colleagues and potentially impacted stakeholders of your solution to gain their perspectives. | ☐ |
| **D. Implementing plans for the solution(s)** | | ☐ |
| **E. Managing the solution(s) implementation(s)** | Can you envision how community engagement could enhance and strengthen the management and sustainability of the selected solution(s)?<br>o If yes, click the checkbox in the next column.<br>o If not, talk to some colleagues and potentially impacted stakeholders of your solution to gain their perspectives. | ☐ |
| **F. Assessing and communicating solution(s) impact** | Can you envision how community engagement could enhance and strengthen the impact assessment of the selected solution(s)?<br>o If yes, click the checkbox in the next column.<br>o If not, talk to your colleagues and potentially impacted stakeholders of your solution to gain their perspectives. | ☐ |

Once the questions above have been answered, you'll have more clarity around where in the project cycle you'll be engaging the community.

## Step 4: Developing a project brief

Prior to bringing the community engagement core team together, it is important to establish a project brief to ensure all team members are on the same page regarding the project for which the community engagement plan is being created. Your project brief should contain at least the following headings:

| Project Brief | |
|---|---|
| **Key information about the grant.**<br>o Problems and solutions applicable under the grant.<br>o Community engagement requirements.<br>o Expense reimbursement for planning purposes (cover community engagement) | **Projected project budget (include a line item for community engagement).** |
| **Clear reasons and value-add city leadership have identified this grant opportunity.** | **Community engagement entry points for this project.** |
| **Names of neighborhoods/census tracts that fall within the grant proposal.** | **A list of project aspects that cannot change or be altered, meaning these aspects cannot be influenced by the community and stakeholders.**<br>**Tip:** Reference any policy/ordinance/law guiding this project (focus on the ones that will have an impact on the community engagement plan). |
| **A list of secured and potential project partners and funders.** | **Roles needed for the community engagement plan.** |
| **Key milestones and timeline.** | **Values city leadership will use to guide this project which will also guide the community engagement plan. Attach the Declaration of Service signed by the mayor.** |

**Do you have questions or need further help?** Please attend a coaching session or office hours.

## Section II: Checking assumptions and aligning with stakeholders of focus

Now that you have a community engagement core team established and there is a shared understanding of the project and where community engagement is expected during the project lifecycle, it is important to connect the core team to assess their assumptions and clarify who needs to be engaged in order to ensure the community engagement plan is equitable and inclusive. There are two steps in this process:

**Step 1:**
Hosting a kickoff meeting

**Step 2:**
Performing an impact assessment

### Step 1: Hosting a kickoff meeting

Now is time to schedule meetings with the community engagement core team. The immediate goals for the core group are as follows:

- Gain alignment on the project and where community engagement will be planned.
- Understand who is going to be impacted by this project.
- Make a list of stakeholders the community engagement plan will involve.
- Agree on meeting frequency and establish some group agreements, duration, and next meeting's agenda.

## Tips for your meetings with the core team

| | |
|---|---|
| Meetings should always have an agenda and be two hours or less.<br><br>After the initial round of planning meetings, aim for all subsequent meetings to be one hour or less.<br><br>Group agreements should be co-created by the core group during the first meeting. Here are some ideas: listening for understanding, doing work between meetings, speaking from experience, being flexible, holding truths lightly, and sharing speaking time. | Action steps to take for your first meeting:<br>Select people to invite to the meeting<br>Establish a meeting agenda<br>Identify date, time, and location options for the meeting and send out invitations requesting participants to indicate their preferences<br>Select the final date, time, and location and confirm with participants<br>Prep materials needed for the meeting (the Project Brief should be covered in the first meeting)<br>Decide if facilitator is needed; if yes, secure and brief them<br>Decide if any accommodations are needed; if yes, secure them |

## Step 2: Step-by-step guide for facilitating an impact assessment

**Prior to the meeting with the core team:**

1. Make a map of the census tracts or neighborhood residents and other stakeholders the proposed grant project is claiming to directly impact.
   - **Tip:** If you are looking for tools to help you with this step, consider the following:
     - The new Climate Resilience Map
     - Free (or paid) versions of PolicyMap and ArcGIS.
     - Social Explorer mapping data (with a free and paid version).
2. Pull together key demographic data about each impacted neighborhood and make it available as a handout.
   - **Tip:** If you are looking for a tool to help you with this step, consider the following:
     - Census
     - American Community Survey
     - StatsAmerica
3. Connect with relevant core team members for them to prepare briefs using existing documents that shed light on the characteristics and lived experiences of residents and other key stakeholders in the neighborhoods of focus.
4. Pull together a list of stakeholders to potentially engage with in each impacted neighborhood and make it available as a handout.

**At the meeting with the core team:**

*Once you have invited your initial community members:*

1 Explain the purpose of this activity and share the number of census tracts or neighborhoods of focus this project will directly impact.

2 Pick the first census tract or neighborhood of focus with which to perform the first impact assessment.

3. Prior to starting, explain to the core team that the purpose of this exercise is to share perspectives without being judged by others and without the need to defend answers. This is a free-flowing conversation with questions and answers. Remind the group that if there is something they don't know to jot it down and create a plan later in the meeting for how to address it.

4. Break the group into 6-10 members if you have more than 12 people. If you would like more intimate conversations, then break the group into four people per group.

5. Pass out the Impact Evaluation chart to everyone and make one copy visible to everyone by projecting it on the screen or printing a large enough copy you can write on.

6. Give participants time to read the Impact Evaluation chart and invite them to place their individual X in appropriate columns per question.

7. After each person has enough alone time to fill out the chart, the facilitator of each group or the group as a whole, depending on the layout, asks each person to share where they placed their X. Each person in the room will indicate their input per question, and the facilitator will check the appropriate box for each participant contribution.

8. After the facilitator captures where each individual wants a check mark and shows top picks, it is time to get general consensus on where the check mark should be per question. Explain this to the participants.
   - The facilitator counts the number of ticks per box per question, ranges the check marks per question, and indicates a probable midpoint.
   - The facilitator captures any further detail that may provide context for the midpoint check marks.

9. Once the collective checks have been indicated, the facilitator reviews and captures any critical insight. For example, critical insights can include clustering/consensus of check marks or a wide range of answers. Use the group's responses to build towards these insights.

10. Next, the facilitator asks for volunteers who will go out into the census tracts or neighborhoods of focus to validate the assumptions the group made by going into the areas to have informal conversations and/or informational interviews with residents and other key stakeholders.

Once volunteers are identified, schedule a time with them to prepare for these conversations. Here's a list of items this group of core team members could assess through the neighborhood-based conversations:

11

- Are the core group's assumptions correct around the different impact assessment checks?
- Would they be willing to inform the core group's community engagement plan? If yes, when could they meet, at what time, where, and would they need any accommodations or incentives to provide this valuable input?
- Would they be willing to play a role in the community engagement plan implementation? If yes, when could they meet, at what time, where, and would they need any accommodations or incentives to provide this valuable input?
- Gather their contact information to add them into the project communication database and, for those interested, involve them in the community engagement plan development and implementation.

12 Set the next meeting to review the findings from the neighborhood- based conversations and make any adjustments to the core team's impact assessment assumptions.

13 At that next meeting, review the final impact assessment and answer the following questions as a team making sure to capture the answers for future reference:

| Tier | Questions | Responses |
|---|---|---|
| Tier 1 | Which residents and other stakeholders are tier one (1) priority for your community engagement plan for each census tract or neighborhood of focus? | |
| | Where do they want to be engaged, for what reason, and how? What would ensure their full participation? | |
| | How do they prefer to be informed about the project and future engagement opportunities after the initial engagement? | |
| | How representative is your tier one (1) list in terms of the disadvantaged community characteristics? | |
| | Are there any risks you need to manage? | |

| Tier | Questions | Responses |
|---|---|---|
| Tier 2 | Which residents and other stakeholders are tier two (2) priority for your community engagement plan for each census tract or neighborhood of focus? | |
| | Where do they want to be engaged, for what reason, and how? What would ensure their full participation? | |
| | How do they prefer to be informed about the project and future engagement opportunities after the initial engagement? | |
| | How representative is your tier two (2) list in terms of the disadvantaged community characteristics? | |
| | Are there any risks you need to manage? | |
| Tier 3 | Which residents and other stakeholders are tier three (3) priority for your community engagement plan for each census tract or neighborhood of focus? | |
| | Where do they want to be engaged, for what reason, and how? What would ensure their full participation? | |
| | How do they prefer to be informed about the project and future engagement opportunities after the initial engagement? | |
| | How representative is your tier three (3) list in terms of the disadvantaged community characteristics? | |
| | Are there any risks you need to manage? | |

**Note:**
*Tier 1* means that participants must be reached and engaged in high participation rates (50% or higher) of your engagement plan.

*Tier 2* means that participants should be reached and engaged in moderate (20%-49%) to high participation rate of your engagement plan.

*Tier 3* means that effort should be made to reach these participants and their participation rates are low (19% or lower) to moderate.

**Do you have questions or need further help?** Please attend a coaching session or office hours.

## Section III: Establishing community engagement S.M.A.R.T.I.E. goals

Now that your community engagement core team has clarity on the entry points for community engagement during the project lifecycle, develop a list of stakeholders to engage, a list of community members and stakeholders who want to be involved in the community engagement planning and management, and what each community member and stakeholder will need to fully participate.

At this point in the process, it is time to establish **Specific Measurable Attainable Relevant Timely Inclusive and Equitable (SMARTIE)** goals for your engagement plan.

| | |
|---|---|
| Specific | Specific indicators that provide sufficient details around what will done, with whom, by when. |
| Measurable | Measurable indicators that track progress toward a goal with a numeric component, such as a number or percent, and an identified data source. |
| Achievable | Achievable indicators that are realistic with ambitious aims. |
| Realistic | Realistic plan that considers time, resources, and capacity. |
| Time-Bound | Time-Bound deadlines which are necessary to stay on track. |
| Inclusive | Inclusive indicators incorporate the perspectives of traditionally marginalized groups. |
| Equity-Informed | Equity-Informed indicators provide the framework for measuring inequities and identification of disparities within populations and systems. |

## Creating your S.M.A.R.T.I.E. community engagement goals

At the next meeting with your community engagement core group, take time to agree on a set of S.M.A.R.T.I.E. goals. Depending on the size of your core group and time constraints, you may use the work up to this point to draft some goals prior to the meeting or you may choose to develop everything together.

Please note, a version of the following goals should apply for your entire engagement plan which includes the chosen engagement techniques *(which we'll choose in the next section):*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Goal 1** | The community engagement lead will collect and analyze key demographic data immediately after each engagement technique and work with the core team to adjust outreach efforts for any upcoming engagement techniques in order to close gaps in participant representation.<br><br>**Note:** The core team should decide on benchmarks when it comes to demographic representation within each census tract or neighborhood of focus. For example, if a neighborhood of focus is made up of 5,000 residents of which 20% identify as African American, 15% as Latino/Hispanic, 5% as Asian Pacific Islander, and 3% as Caucasian, the core team may set an initial benchmark of wanting to engage with 60% of residents, and set representation benchmarks based on this proportion: in this case, 10% should identify as African American, 7.5% as Latino/Hispanic, 2.5% as Asian Pacific Islander, and 1.5% as Caucasian. The idea is to surpass the benchmarks, but if they are achieved, there is consensus that the information gathered would be valuable to the core team, project leadership, and key stakeholders in the neighborhoods of focus. |
| **Goal 2** | The community engagement lead will work with the core group to circle back with participants within two weeks or less following an engagement event or interaction to communicate in a relevant and accessible channel what insight was captured during that engagement, what the next steps are in the engagement plan and the project overall, and how they can stay engaged. |
| **Goal 3** | The community engagement lead will identify and secure necessary incentives and accommodations a week or more prior to any engagement activity to ensure full stakeholder participation. |
| **Goal 4** | The community engagement lead will ensure participant evaluation forms and demographic collection forms are distributed, collected, analyzed, and reported to the core team after the conclusion of each engagement technique. |

To begin the process of developing the additional community engagement S.M.A.R.T.I.E. for the proposed project at hand, review the project brief and remind everyone of the entry points for engagement. Once ready, answer the following set of questions (keep in mind that some of these may be more relevant for your team than others):

| Question | Response |
|---|---|
| Where would the engagement of identified stakeholders make the project more equitable and inclusive and amplify its positive impact while reducing any potential negative side effects? Please describe in as much detail as possible. | |
| What do we want to better understand, gather input around, and/or generate ideas with our identified stakeholders? Please describe in as much detail as possible. | |
| Can your identified stakeholders help create balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities, and solutions? Please describe in as much detail as possible. | |
| Where could the identified stakeholders provide leadership? Please describe in as much detail as possible. | |

Once you've brainstormed your answers, use this worksheet to translate your wisdom and insights into a set of S.M.A.R.T.I.E. goals.

**Here's an example to get you started:**

*"By the end of March 2023, 45% or more of our residents who identify as Samoan within the Dunbar neighborhood will help us finalize our understanding of the problem this grant proposal will address and the potential solutions we will implement in their neighborhood."*

**Capture the core team's additional S.M.A.R.T.I.E. goals below:**

| |
|---|
| |
| |
| |
| |
| |

**Note:** Please be mindful of any goal pairing to specific stakeholders within your tier 1-3 listing. If the core team feels some goals are more appropriate for certain individuals/groups from your stakeholder list, reflect on why that is and check any assumptions prior to making any final decisions.

**Do you have questions or need further help?** Please attend a coaching session or office hours.

## Section IV: Selecting and planning engagement techniques

Now that your community engagement core team has a number of S.M.A.R.T.I.E. goals, it is time for the group to pick the key engagement techniques for your engagement plan. This is when the team gets to be creative and innovative as they translate the information community members and other stakeholders who live in the areas of focus shared with the team earlier into relevant, equitable, and inclusive experiences so they can fully participate in the various stages of the project. Getting to this stage is no small feat. Congratulations! There are *two* steps in this process:

**Step 1:**
Selecting the engagement technique(s)

**Step 2:**
Planning the engagement technique(s)

### Step 1: Selecting the engagement technique(s)

To begin the process, make sure everyone has the community engagement goals visible to them. Follow these steps:

1. Ask each individual to review each goal and identify up to five engagement techniques to pair with each goal using these resources: Cities of Service Citizen Engagement Techniques and Queensland Government Community Engagement Techniques.

   **Note:** One engagement technique could be paired with more than one goal. This is your initial brainstorming of possible engagement techniques the team will use for the engagement plan; it is not the final list.

2. Once everyone has had time to pick their individual engagement techniques for each goal, ask each person to report out. As a team, begin to compile your collective list of engagement techniques.

3. Once you have a compiled list, use the following questions to narrow down the engagement techniques you will implement for this engagement plan (on next page):

| Question | Response |
|---|---|
| On a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being very likely, how likely will this engagement technique help us achieve the paired goals? | |
| Can the engagement technique be designed in a way to meet required participation accommodations? | |
| Do we have time and money to prepare and implement the engagement technique? | |
| Does the engagement technique require skilled facilitation or other experts?<br>○ If yes, do we have access to these experts? Remember, they may be in the core group, project partners, or part of the stakeholder list the team created in the earlier section of this workbook. | |

By now you should have a list of goals with their respective engagement techniques along with estimated resource needs and timelines.

## Step 2: Planning the engagement technique(s)

At the next community engagement core team meeting, break the core team into small groups of 3-4 and assign each small group one or more goals with the associated engagement techniques. Ask the small groups to fill out the Engagement Technique Planning Template for each engagement technique. Once each team has completed their template worksheets, put each engagement technique name under the month in which it is to be implemented using the table below:

| Month | Engagement Technique |
|---|---|
| January | |
| February | |
| March | |
| April | |
| May | |

| | |
|---|---|
| June | |
| July | |
| August | |
| September | |
| October | |
| November | |
| December | |

Once the Engagement Technique Planning template has been filled out for each chosen engagement technique, enter the overall information for the following:

**Total budget:**

**Key due dates that need to be met:**

Once the core team finalizes the engagement techniques, it is time to share them, along with their respective S.M.A.R.T.I.E. goals, with the following stakeholders to secure the necessary resources and receive feedback. They should also be shared at a collective core group meeting to make any final adjustments:

**Stakeholders**

- ✓ City leadership (mayor, city manager, city council)
- ✓ Supervisor/director of the project manager and the community engagement lead
- ✓ Any other impacted city department directors
- ✓ Key project partners
- ✓ Key individuals from the tier 1, 2, and 3 stakeholder list

  **Note:** This group should especially be engaged around the accommodations and incentives being planned so the neighborhoods of focus participation are representative of key demographics.

Once you make adjustments based on stakeholder feedback, update them on the changes that their input made possible.

**Do you have questions or need further help?** Please attend a coaching session or office hours.

## Section V: Establishing a communications plan

Now that your community engagement core team has clear entry points for engagement, S.M.A.R.T.I.E goals, and associated engagement techniques, it is time for the group to develop a holistic communications plan. There are *three* steps in this process:

**Step 1:**
Identifying what talking points need to be prepared

**Step 2:**
Identifying communication entry points, audience, and channels

**Step 3:**
Creating a communications plan

### Step 1: Identifying what talking points need to be prepared

The core team should think through the following questions and use the answers to develop a one pager which all staff and partners associated with the project and the engagement plan have available.

**General talking points to have ready about the project itself. Here are some questions the core team should answer and create a one pager around:**

- What is the project at hand? How would you frame it for the audience? What are the foreseeable benefits that should be highlighted and how will these benefits improve the lived experiences of the stakeholders in the impacted neighborhoods/census tracts?
- Do you have data and stories to share to illustrate both the need for the project and the positive foreseeable impacts?
- What are some important milestones and dates for this project?

**General talking points to have ready about the community engagement plan for the project. Here are some questions the core team should answer and create a one pager around:**

- Why is the engagement of stakeholders important to the city, and what is the city trying to achieve with the engagement? Tailor this for each stakeholder group if necessary.
- What is the city putting in place to ensure inclusive and equitable participation of all those impacted and interested in the project?
- What can the different stakeholders look forward to as far as the engagement activities? Are there any key dates, times, and locations they should be jotting down?
- Whom should they contact if they have any questions about the community engagement work for the project?
- How will the different stakeholders be informed about the engagement activities and is there a way for them to sign up for updates?
- How will the participants of the engagement activities be informed about how their input was used? Who will be using the information gathered from the engagement activities and what will they be doing with it?

## Step 2: Identifying communication entry points, audience, and channels

At the next core team meeting, break the team up into smaller groups of 3-5 and have them work through the Communication Entry Points worksheet together. Once every team is done, ask them to report out and fill out one collective worksheet. Once this is done, the core team will have the information necessary to create an overall communications plan for the community engagement plan.

## Step 3: Creating a communications plan

Prior to the next core team meeting, work with one or more core team members to draft a communications plan for the community engagement plan of the project. The communications plan typically consists of the logistical detail behind the decisions made in the Communication Entry Points worksheet. Most of the time, cities or project partners have templates to work with from previous projects.

**Note:** The communications plan should be treated as a living document just like the community engagement plan. The community engagement lead, project lead, and the communications lead should review the communications plan quarterly to ensure it matches progression of the community engagement plan and the overall project.

**Do you have questions or need further help?** Please attend a coaching session or office hours.

## Section VI: Establishing continuous improvement process

As mentioned earlier, the community engagement as well as the communications plans are living documents that may need to be updated as the project evolves. This is why establishing a continuous improvement process is important. This process will help the core group assess who is being reached by the engagement techniques, what their experience has been in order to adjust the outreach work, and how future engagement techniques are to be designed.

The core team will also have a better sense of which techniques are working, where improvements are needed, and what incentives bring out the most participation of diverse stakeholders.

### Developing a continuous improvement process

The core team decides when the engagement activities should be assessed. Here are key tools and times that should be considered:

**Right at the end of an engagement activity, participants can complete the following:**

A participant engagement activity evaluation to understand how they heard about the activity, what the experience was like for them, if they are more informed about the project, and if one or more of your S.M.A.R.T.I.E. goals was met.

Here is a sample participant evaluation form.

*Please be sure to have this form translated into languages spoken by the community.*

Demographic collection tool to capture each participant's key demographics in order for the core team to understand who was reached by each engagement activity.

Here is a sample demographic collection form.

**A day or two after the engagement activity, participants can complete the following:**

A reflection moment for the core team after each engagement activity to assess what should be kept the same, changed, or stopped for future implementation of the engagement activity.

Here is a sample reflection form.

**Tips:**

- The core team should identify one or more members who will be responsible for collecting, analyzing, and providing final summaries to the team and ensuring the insights are turned into action.

- Both the participant evaluation and demographic collection forms should be offered electronically and in print. They should be anonymous and collected at the end of the engagement activity.

- Here is a sample statement one of the core team members can make at the beginning of the engagement activity to introduce both forms:

  *"As we have stated, we want our engagement activities for this project to reach all residents and other important stakeholders who are impacted and interested in this project. With that in mind, we have prepared anonymous forms to help us capture three things: what you thought of today's engagement experience, which neighborhood you live in, and how you identify in terms of age, gender, race, and ethnicity.*

  *This information is critical for us to better understand if participants in our engagement activities are reaching all our neighbors. If you have any questions, please let me know. We'll be passing out those two anonymous forms at the end. It'll take you five minutes or less to fill out, and we would like you to leave them in this box before you leave. If you have a smartphone or a tablet, you can fill out both forms using this link."*

## Section VII: Putting it all together

With a continuous improvement process in place, it is time to meld all the critical pieces from the previous sections into a cohesive management plan. *This* is what we call your community engagement plan. The plan should consist of at least the following and be built in either Google Sheets or Excel:

- Name of the engagement activity
  - Associated S.M.A.R.T.I.E goals
- Date(s), location(s), and time(s) the engagement activity will take place
- Stakeholders of focus with demographic percentage benchmarks to assess how representative the participants are of the neighborhood/area of focus
- List of accommodations and incentives needed
- List of roles needed
- Date(s), time(s), and location(s) for any staff or volunteer orientation/training
- List of materials and tools needed for the engagement activity
- Overall timeline with key milestones that captures the overall planning, implementation, and assessment of the engagement activity
- Final budget
- Linked agenda for the day of the engagement activity (breaks down what will happen, when, and by whom)
- Communications activity per stage
- Key talking points and handouts for the day of the engagement activity
  - One pagers about the project and project engagement
  - Participant evaluation form
  - Demographic collection form
- Names of core team members responsible for the planning, implementation, and assessment of this engagement activity and their respective roles and responsibilities

## Community Engagement Plan Management Check-List

### Before the engagement activity takes place

- ☐ There is a "to do" list with due dates and responsible parties for the following sections of the engagement plan:
  - ☐ Securing venue
  - ☐ Securing accommodations and incentives
  - ☐ Identifying demographic benchmarks
  - ☐ Setting up and preparing materials for the orientation/training
  - ☐ Ensuring day-of set up is done
  - ☐ Ensuring tools and materials are ready and available on location day of
  - ☐ Developing the materials and tools
  - ☐ Securing the money
  - ☐ Purchasing what is needed
  - ☐ Sending out invitations
  - ☐ Responding to inquiries
  - ☐ Sending out follow-up communication after the engagement activity
  - ☐ Developing the agenda for the day
  - ☐ Ensuring technology works the day of
- ☐ Roles and responsibilities are defined for the duration of the engagement activity
- ☐ All the materials, tools, and logistics are set
- ☐ Invitations for the engagement activity are scheduled to occur 2-3 weeks prior
- ☐ Accommodations and incentives for participants have been secured
- ☐ Facilitators have been secured, trained, and briefed

## After the engagement activity

- [ ] Follow-up communication with participants sent
    - [ ] Thank you email with any next steps and calls to action
    - [ ] A week or so later, a summary of how their input was used
- [ ] Core team member enters all the participant evaluations and demographics data into a database (ensure that your database is password-protected to ensure data security)
- [ ] Core team member assesses demographics and evaluation data and provides a summary of findings to the core team
- [ ] Core team reviews the findings and determines what changes need to be made to close any gaps in participant demographics and engagement activity experiences
- [ ] Next planning session set for upcoming engagement activities

## Wrap up

**Congratulations!** You have successfully created your community engagement plan. This is a tremendous milestone and one that should help the overall project success.

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| | Earlier in the workbook, we asked you to fill out a 10-minute survey. We would like to ask you to fill out this survey one more time which will help us gauge how useful this workbook was for you and the core team. Please click here to begin. |